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HEADLINE: Live from California, Oswald put on TV trial

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BODY:

Lee Harvey Oswald will go on trial today in San Francisco for the murder of President John F. Kennedy - and you can watch it on live television.

That's the idea behind a partnership between the American Bar Association and Court TV, the cable network that broadcasts proceedings from actual trials.

"We're hoping people learn a little about what happened in Dealey Plaza that day, and a lot about how what happened would have been litigated had it occurred circa 1992," says Merrill Brown, Court TV's senior vice president.

The unscripted mock trial, produced by the ABA as part of its annual meeting, begins today at noon and concludes tomorrow night. The event - speculating on what might have happened had not JFK's accused assassin been gunned down himself by Jack Ruby - will be telecast on Court TV in its entirety, running from noon to 8 p.m. both days.

"Real" and "shadow" juries were selected from the San Francisco-area jury pool. Actors will play the roles of prospective witnesses that will include Oswald and his wife, Marina, former Texas Gov. John Connally, eyewitnesses to the Nov. 22, 1963, assassination, investigators and doctors from Parkland Hospital in Dallas.

Some of the nation's leading lawyers and judges signed on.

John W. Keker, the San Francisco lawyer who prosecuted Lt. Col. Oliver North on charges stemming from the Iran-Contra investigation, will help argue the government's case against Oswald. U.S. District Judge Kimba Wood, who presided over junk-bond financier Michael Milken's trial, is on a panel of legal analysts.

The two juries will be monitored by experts and cameras, with jury deliberations fully televised. The broadcast also will feature panels commenting on the proceedings, audience discussion and analysis of the case with experts.

The trial - United States vs. Oswald - is supposed to showcase the latest in computer animation, reconstruction techniques and other state-of-the-art technologies now used in trials.

The ABA promises that sophisticated computer analytical techniques will

reveal newsworthy information about the assassination, Court TV's Mr. Brown says. Discussion of conspiracy theories definitely won't be on the agenda, he adds.

"Obviously, the real trial of Lee Harvey Oswald would have had a longer duration. Here, they've narrowed the issue, only dealing with the scene of the crime," Mr. Brown says. "There will be a number of so-called eyewitnesses, but none of the stuff about Oswald and Cuba.

Court TV has been lauded by critics for educating the public about the workings of the U.S. legal system.

The network has chosen to violate its policy of discouraging the use of dramatizations as part of trial coverage because, according to a statement by Court TV President Steven Brill, the event is "a substantive, factual and educational presentation by some of the nation's most distinguished legal minds."

GRAPHIC: Photo, Lee Harvey Oswald ; Photo, John Connally

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